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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001250

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SUBJECT: JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS KABUL

REF: TOKYO 1194

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Joe Donovan for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura visited Kabul May 3, where he met separately with President Karzai, Foreign Minister Spanta, and U.N. Senior Representative Kai Eide. The purpose of the visit was to signal Japan's continued commitment to support the government of Afghanistan, but no new specific pledges of support were discussed. A MOFA contact told us his ministry and the Ministry of Finance are still working to decide what type of pledge Japan will make at the upcoming Paris Support Conference for Afghanistan. FM Koumura considered the visit a success, and found Karzai's commitment to fighting terrorism further bolstered by the recent attempt on his life. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) FM Koumura's May 3 unannounced visit to Kabul was closely held for security reasons, according to MOFA Second Middle East Principal Deputy Director Motosada Matano. Japan's already hypersensitivity to security issues was increased to even higher levels following the recent assassination attempt against President Karzai. Koumura spent five hours in Kabul, where he met separately with President Karzai, Foreign Minister Spanta, and U.N. Senior Representative Kai Eide. Matano reported Koumura was very pleased with the visit, which was intended to signal Japan's continued support for Afghanistan, but added that MOFA officials were disappointed by the almost non-existent press coverage the visit received in Japan.

¶3. (C) In his meetings with Karzai and Spanta, Koumura reiterated Japan's commitment to support the government of Afghanistan, reported Matano, and emphasized the need for Afghanistan to practice good governance, address the narcotics issue, and improve relations with its neighbors, particularly Pakistan. Koumura explained to them Japan's approach to assisting in Afghanistan is based on a "two wheels of a cart" approach, with the two wheels being Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the Japan Self Defense Forces (SDF). Matano was quick to point out that the SDF component of Japan's assistance was limited to the participation of these forces in the ongoing Operation Enduring Freedom Maritime Interdiction Operation, and that Japan is not contemplating additional missions in Afghanistan for the SDF. With regard to ODA, no specific projects or pledges were discussed, said Matano, who added that different bureaus within MOFA, and the Ministry of Finance, are still discussing what Japan will be able to offer at the upcoming Paris Support Conference. (NOTE: As reported reftel, Matano told us he is hopeful Japan will offer a "tangible figure" at the Paris conference. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) President Karzai and FM Spanta both thanked Koumura

for Japan's generous assistance to Afghanistan, particularly noting the participation of the SDF in the Indian Ocean mission, said Matano. In addition, both said they were impressed with the high rate of completion of Japan's ODA-pledged projects. (NOTE: When asked Matano reported that the subject of the Ring Road was not discussed in any of Koumura's meetings. END NOTE.)

15. (C) Karzai also briefed Koumura on the recent assassination attempt against him, said Matano. The Japanese assess that the attempt has increased Karzai's anger with the terrorists who are operating in his country, whom he spoke of in emotional and disparaging terms. Karzai did comment to Koumura that while it is possible, he believes, to negotiate with moderate elements of the Taliban, he unequivocally rejects the idea of talks with anyone affiliated with Al Qaida. With regard to Pakistan, Karzai is not enthusiastic about and is suspicious of Islamabad's plan to start talking with certain terrorist elements who, Karzai believes, will not change their attitudes or behavior. Karzai's main message was that he will not give in to terrorists, said Matano. The Japanese did not get the impression from Spanta that he is as exercised as Karzai about fighting terrorism.

16. (C) In his meeting with Eide, Koumura was politely pressed to make a significant pledge at the Paris meeting, but specifics were not discussed. Eide, like our previous demarche on this issue (reftel), stressed the need for election observers and assistance. He also expressed thanks for Japan's previous pledges and, like the Afghans, complemented Koumura on the high rate of completion on

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Japanese-sponsored projects.

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